

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 OMB-01 IO-10 /081 W

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R 281802Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2597

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARIS 22162

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: FR PINT PBOR

SUBJECT: AUTONOMIST DISTURBANCES IN CORSICA

REF: PARIS 22042

1. SUMMARY: THE SITUATION IN CORSICA IS WORSENING RAPIDLY, AND MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR PONIATOWSKI HAS NOW DECLARED HE WILL SEND ARMY REGULARS TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION IF EVENTS GET OUT OF HAND ONCE AGAIN. MEANWHILE, EDMOND SIMEONI COMES UP FOR ARRAIGNMENT ON AUGUST 28, WHILE VARIOUS GROUPS IN CORSICA MOVE TO HEAT UP THEIR REACTIONS IF THEY ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH GOF'S HANDLING OF THE AFFAIR. THE PIEDS-NOIRS HAVE NOW BECOME A SIDE ISSUE IN THE BROADER PROBLEM OF REGIONALISM AND CENTRALIZATION. UNFORTUNATELY, NO MATTER WHAT GOF DECIDES TO DO AT THIS POINT, IT COULD
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BE THE LOSER. THE NEXT FEW DAYS MAY WELL SET THE TONE

FOR A LONG AND BITTER STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE CORSICANS
AND THE CONTINENTALS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FIRST MILITARY SIEGE OF BASTIA IS OVER; THE
POLITICAL BATTLE IS JUST BEGINNING. ON THE AFTERNOON
OF AUGUST 28 ARC LEADER EDMOND SIMEONI WILL BE
ARRAIGNED ALONG WITH TEN OTHER MILITANTS BEFORE THE
COURT OF STATE SECURITY IN PARIS FOR AN "ASSAULT
AGAINST NATIONAL UNITY." ONE OF HIS BROTHERS, ROLAND,
HAS JUST BEEN FREED AFTER QUESTIONING AND THE OTHER,
MAX, REMAINS AT LIBERTY FOR THE MOMENT IN BASTIA.
MEANWHILE, AN ANTI-REPRESSION COMMITTEE HAS BEEN FORMED
IN AJACCIO THAT GROUPS SUCH DISPARATE ELEMENTS AS ARC,
THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND THE LOCAL JAYCEES (JEUNE
CHAMBRE ECONOMIQUE). ON ITS PART, GOF HAS ANNOUNCED
BELATED MEASURES TO ACCELERATE AID TO CORSICA, AND
GISCARD DECLARED JUST AFTER YESTERDAY'S CABINET MEETING,
AT WHICH IT WAS DECIDED TO OUTLAW ARC, THAT HE HOLDS THE
CORSICAN POPULATION IN HIS AFFECTION.

3. GABRIEL GILLY, PREFECT OF CORSICA, HAS PUBLICLY
LAMENTED THE FACT THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1936
FRENCH NATIONALS HAVE, WITH PREMEDITATION, FIRED
AGAINST THE FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER (EXCLUDING COMMON
CRIMINALS). JEAN ZUCARELLI, THE MAYOR/DEPUTY OF BASTIA,
HAS WARNED AGAINST THE CONSEQUENCES OF GOF'S RENEGING
ON ITS PROMISE OF IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR THE
ISLAND. HE HAS CALLED FOR A REFERENDUM TO DETERMINE THE
ASPIRATIONS OF THE MAJORITY OF CORSICANS RESIDENT IN
CORSICA. ON HIS PART MAX SIMEONI HAS IN THE SAME
BREATH BOTH APPEALED TO THE ARC MILITANTS TO REMAIN CALM
AND WARNED THAT "VERY SOON THERE WILL BE IN CORSICA A
POPULAR MANIFESTATION THAT WILL NOT NECESSARILY BE A
STREET MANIFESTATION." INTERIOR MINISTER PONIATOWSKI'S
PROMISE, MADE THE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 28, TO SEND

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PARIS 22162

TROOPS IF NECESSARY, UNFORTUNATELY COMPLEMENTS SIMEONI'S PREDICTION.

4. IN REALITY, THE PIEDS-NOIRS ARE ONLY A CATALYST THAT BRINGS TO A HEAD A LONG-STANDING FEUD BETWEEN PARIS AND CORSICA. THE LATTER HAVE MORE OR LESS VEHEMENTLY CLAMORED FOR MORE FREEDOM IN THE DETERMINATION OF THEIR INTERIOR AFFAIRS SINCE THE END OF WWII; AND THIS DESIRE IS TIED WITH THE LARGER NATIONAL ISSUES OF DECENTRALIZATION. MOST OF THE SO-CALLED "AUTONOMIST" MOVEMENTS IN CORSICA DO NOT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SMALL, ULTRA-RADICAL GROUPS LIKE GHJUTIZIA PAOLINA, ENVISAGE REAL SEPARATION FROM THE MOTHERLAND. INSTEAD THEY HOPE FOR ATTENTION TO THE ECONOMIC WOES OF THE ISLAND AND A RECOGNITION ON THE PART OF GOF OF CORSICA'S UNIQUE CULTURAL HERITAGE. THESE MOVEMENTS ACTUALLY REPRESENT ONLY ABOUT 5 OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION (THOUGH THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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PERCENTAGE MAY INCREASE IN VIEW OF RECENT EVENTS).

5. COMMENT: THINGS ARE GOING FROM BAD TO WORSE, RAPIDLY. YESTERDAY MORNING ANY FRENCHMAN COULD HAVE PREDICTED -- AND MANY DID -- THAT A MINISTERIAL DECISION TO PROSCRIBE ARC WOULD LEAD TO EXACTLY THE KIND OF EVENTS THAT OCCURRED IN BASTIA. TODAY ONE CAN PREDICT WITH EQUAL SURETY THAT THE ARRIVAL OF THE ARMY IN CORSICA WOULD FURTHER INFLAME THE SITUATION, AND THAT THE PROSCRIPTION OF ARC WILL ONLY SERVE TO DRIVE THE ORGANIZATION UNDERGROUND AND TO GLORIFY IT

IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF YOUNG CORSICANS. IN A SENSE
GOF IS CAUGHT BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA:
JURIDICALLY, IT MUST CONDEMN DR. EDMOND SIMEONI, YET HIS
CONDEMNATION COULD LEAD TO ACTS SO DRASTIC AS THE
ATTEMPTED OCCUPATION OF GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON THE
ISLAND WITH RESULTANT FURTHER LOSS OF LIFE. WHILE IT
IS TRUE THAT THE GENERAL MOOD IN FRANCE AT THIS TIME
IS SYMPATHETIC TO A "LAW-AND-ORDER" HANDLING OF SUCH
SITUATIONS, PONIATOWSKI IS COMING UNDER INCREASING
CRITICISM IN THE PRESS AND ELSEWHERE FOR HIS DRACONIAN
METHODS. AFTER ALL, HOW MANY MORE POLICEMEN'S FUNERALS
CAN HE ATTEND BEFORE POLITICAL ELEMENTS OTHER THAN THE
OPPOSITION BEGIN TO TAKE NOTICE?
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